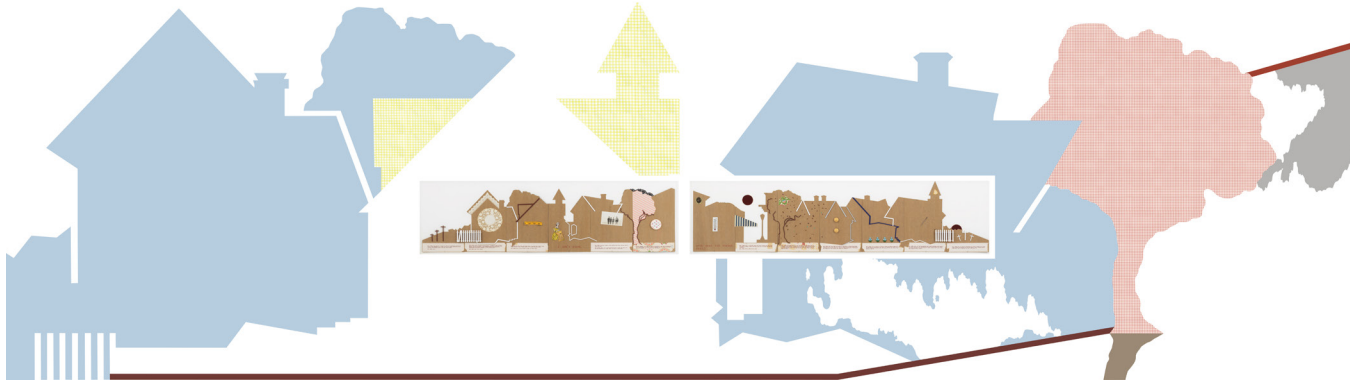


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U.S.A.: Alexis Smith, 1971–1980



Our Town, 1980

For the 2020 edition of The Armory Show, Garth Greenan Gallery presents *U.S.A.: Alexis Smith, 1971–1980*, an exhibition of installations and collages by Alexis Smith. Throughout the 1970s, Smith began to stage her collages within increasingly panoramic installations, experientially augmenting her unique brand of conceptual art suffused with her fascination with Hollywood and the American West. Works like *Tightrope* (1980) and *Our Town* (1980) extend into three dimensions, transforming gallery walls into theatrical backdrops.

In *Tightrope*, colored pages—each a carnivalesque pastel—contain sequential excerpts from Raymond Chandler’s *The Little Sister*, where the story’s narrator attends a film. The installation’s walls—painted with lavender and white stripes—simulate a circus tent: an immersive staging for the collage. The story’s narrator expresses his cynical amusement at the film he’s watching, “one of those glass-and-chromium deals where everybody smiled too much and talked too much and knew it,” while Smith introduces found objects, including match boxes, paper costumes, and peanut shells. Each addition, along with the installation, confuses the boundaries between the viewer, narrator, film, and audience within *The Little Sister*, depicted in a silhouetted pencil drawing along the bottom of each page.

Like *Tightrope*, *Our Town* (1980) follows Smith’s iconic formula of sequential texts, this time staging passages from Thornton Wilder’s *Our Town*. When a furniture dealer from Boston offers the character Mrs. Gibbs \$350 (around \$10,000 in today’s currency) for her highboy, she begins to daydream about a trip to Paris, despite her husband’s insistence that their routine trips to Civil War battlefields are “enough treat for anybody.” Smith depicts a woman knitting in a rocking chair as domestic objects—a needle, yarn, embroidered flowers, measuring tape, and a doily—playfully trace the outlines of trees and houses in the collage, delineating the confining boundaries of her small town. The character’s world expands and contracts, as her dream of Paris is indefinitely postponed. White crosses on the final page of Smith’s collage might mark the graves of Civil War soldiers, but serve a dual purpose as they mark Mrs. Gibbs’ unrealized dream.

Born in Los Angeles in 1949, Alexis Smith studied painting at the University of California, Irvine. She has exhibited extensively, including shows with Mizuno Gallery (1974, Los Angeles), Whitney Museum of American Art (1975, 1991, New York), Nicholas Wilder Gallery (1977, Los Angeles), Holly Solomon Gallery (1977, 1978, 1979, 1981, 1983, New York), Rosamund Felsen Gallery (1978, 1980, 1982, Los Angeles), Margo Leavin Gallery (1985, 1988, 1990, 1993, 1994, 1995, 1999, 2003, 2009, Los Angeles), Walker Art Center (1986, Minneapolis), Wexner Center for the Arts (1997, Columbus, Ohio), Greenberg Van Doren Gallery (2001, 2004, New York), and Honor Fraser Gallery (2013, 2016, Los Angeles).

The artist's work has also been included in many important museum exhibitions, such as *American Narrative: 1967–1977* (1977, Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston), *Making Their Mark: Women Artists Move into the Mainstream, 1970–1985* (1989, Cincinnati Art Museum), *Image World: Art and Media Culture* (1989, Whitney Museum of American Art), *Sunshine & Noir: Art in L.A., 1960–1997* (1997, Louisiana Museum of Modern Art), and *Made in California: Art, Image, and Identity* (2000, Los Angeles County Museum of Art).

Most recently, Smith was included in *Los Angeles: Birth of an Art Capital* (Centre Georges Pompidou, 2006), *WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution* (2007, Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles), *Under the Big Black Sun: California Art, 1974–1981* (2011–2012, Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles), and *Physical: Sex and Body in the 1980s* (2016, Los Angeles County Museum of Art).

A retrospective of Smith's work is currently being organized by the Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego. Smith's work is featured in the collections of major museums around the country, including the Hammer Museum, University of California, Los Angeles; the High Museum of Art, Atlanta; the Los Angeles County Museum of Art; the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; the Museum of Modern Art; the Walker Art Center; and the Whitney Museum of American Art.

Garth Greenan Gallery is pleased to represent Alexis Smith.

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